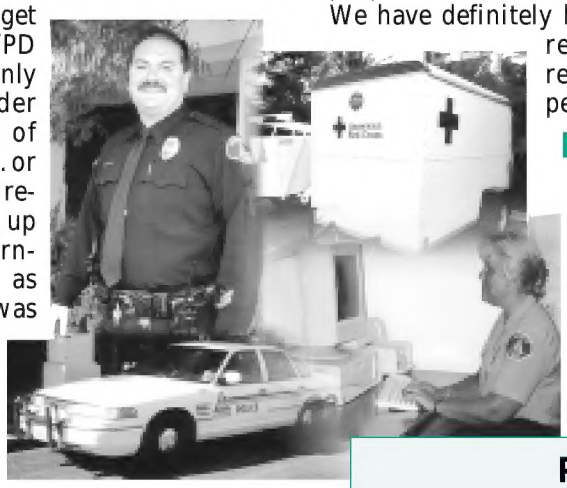
Published by the City of Lafayette
Winter 2002
Vol. 12, No. 1

LAFAYETTE VISTAS

Don't Take Public Safety For Granted

Police officers and firefighters are like moms and dads. We usually take them for granted... wanting them there when we need them, then ignoring them the rest of the time. But on September 11th, most Americans experienced a profound change in attitude towards these public servants.

Who can forget the images of NYPD officers — the only source of order in the midst of extreme chaos... or the stories of firefighters running up the stairs of burning buildings as everyone else was running down? To them, they were just doing their jobs. To us, they were heroes.



Lafayette has 15 sworn police officers who have pledged to protect us individually and collectively. We grumble when they catch us breaking the rules, but we want them to enforce the rules for everyone else, and in a moment of crisis they are the first ones we want to see. Each year Lafayette police respond to over 18,000 calls for service from residents — that's over 2 calls per hour, every hour, 24/7/365. They never know when the next call will come, or what it will be, but they are always ready to serve. Our ability to respond to emergencies and keep Lafayette safe adds to the sense of well-being for every resident. Public safety is an important factor in maintaining the high quality of life expected by our residents.

Sergeant Ricky Ortega said the Lafayette Police, like police departments everywhere, have had an increase in activity since September 11th. "In general people are more concerned and cautious. We have definitely had more calls from residents, especially reporting suspicious people and activities."

Lafayette PD is Efficient & Effective

While approximately one third of Lafayette's general fund expenditures are for public safety ($2.5 million in 2000-2001 budget), it is a small amount compared to similar cities. Today, Lafayette has the lowest number of officers per resident of any city in Contra Costa County. At current staffing levels, much of the time there are only two officers on duty in Lafayette, definitely the bare minimum staffing.

The chart below shows Lafayette has been very cost effective in providing police services compared to other cities. To a large degree, Hank Davis, Lafayette Chief of Police, and his staff have been able to provide a high level of service on a small budget because Lafayette contracts with the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department for police services, giving the city a higher caliber of officers and more resources than could be provided by a small city force. Another way Lafayette police services have been extended is by using volunteer Reserve Officers to augment professional staff. Currently there are 5 Reserve Officers who each work at least 3 days per month at no cost to the city.

Every year Lafayette Police receive many letters of commendation from residents who have had personal interactions with them; however, much of the officers' daily activity is intended to prevent your need for individual police assistance. Hopefully many of you will never need to call them for help — but they will be there if you need them.

POLICE SERVICES COMPARISON

	# of Residents	# of Sworn Officers	Annual Police Services Budget	# of Citizens per Officer	Cost of Police Services per Citizen
Lafayette	23,908	15	$2,470,929	1,594	$103
Moraga	16,290	13	$1,767,083	1,253	$108
Danville	42,854	33	$4,634,378	1,299	$108
Orinda	17,599	14	$2,103,989	1,257	$120
Pleasant Hill	32,837	41	$5,608,736	801	$171

Is Lafayette Prepared for Emergencies?

What would happen if we had a serious public emergency in Lafayette? With a small police force, how would our city handle a large crisis? These questions have been under study for the last two years by the Emergency Preparedness Commission, who, together with the police staff and city management, recently revised the Lafayette Emergency Plan.

The new Lafayette Emergency Plan outlines an Emergency Operations Center be established at the Police Department. This center will be activated when needed and staffed by a combination of city personnel, police officers and volunteers.

On October 19th, the Emergency Operations Center was tested in a Simulated Disaster Drill. Lafayette Police Sergeant Ricky Ortega and Community Services Officer, Cathy Surges, coordinated the emergency drill. Twenty-five people responded to a fake scenario — a wildfire at the Girl Scout Camp off Springhill Road. In addition to city and police staff, the drill included participation by the Contra Costa Fire Department, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, emergency preparedness volunteers, and communication volunteers from RACES, an amateur radio club.

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Revenue Loss Expected in Coming Year

Lafayette, along with just about every other public agency in California, is facing a reduction in revenue now and in the near future. Tracy Robinson, Lafayette Administrative Services Director explained, "In our next budget, we have to assume we will have a reduction in sales tax revenue due to the slow down in the economy. This is a reduction we can probably accommodate with only minor impact. Of greater concern is the fact that the state, in an attempt to balance their budget, is considering taking away additional sources of revenue, in particular, vehicle license fees. If they succeed in doing that, it may affect our ability to provide public services at today's levels."

The greatest fiscal threat facing us is the possibility of more State budget grabs. Historically, the state of California has patched its budget holes by diverting revenues meant for local government into the state's coffers. In the 1991-92 recession the state resolved their budget crisis by a permanent shift in the percentage of property tax allocated to local governments. Although California has had a surplus state budget for the past few years, the state never fully restored the property tax allocation to the cities. So for the last decade, every year, California cities have been deprived of money once intended for them, an amount that equaled $4 billion in 2000!

Now the state is facing another budget deficit, estimated to be $5-$15 billion dollars for 2002-03, and they are again suggesting solutions that will take money away from the cities. The simple fact is that any State budget grab will be sudden, severe — and given the State's history — permanent. While there are a number of "takeaway options," a likely suspect is the "Vehicle License Fee (VLF) backfill," which is worth $1.2 million annually to our community.

What is the VLF backfill? In 1998, the State considered cutting its taxes. But instead, it reduced vehicle license fees (VLF), which is a local revenue source. However, the State "promised" to backfill the lost revenues to cities and counties. Today, the VLF backfill is worth almost $4 billion to the State. Because this represents a huge chunk of the State's projected shortfall, we would be foolish to think that this doesn't look like the proverbial "low-hanging fruit" to many State leaders. However, we believe that the State should balance its budget using its own resources — and not those that belong to local communities.

A VLF takeaway would have a devastating impact on community services. We cannot stress strongly enough how damaging a VLF-takeaway would be to our community. It is a major General Fund revenue source that finances critical local services — such as police, parks and street maintenance — that have no other revenues available to them. Because of this, taking VLF for State purposes will have a devastating effect on local services. It will be a "double-whammy" for us: we will have our own budgetary problems to resolve as we deal with the same revenue shortfalls the State is experiencing, compounded by a huge, arbitrary State takeaway on top of them.

VLF is one of Lafayette's top three General Fund revenue sources, right behind sales and property taxes, bringing in about $1.2 million annually. Placing this in perspective, we spend about $2.5 million annually on police services — VLF represents almost 50% of this cost. On the staffing side, we have 15 sworn police positions, whose cost is roughly equal to the amount of VLF received by the City.

Overall, public safety represents about 35% of our General Fund operating costs. In combination with local revenue declines, taking away the VLF backfill will place unacceptable stresses on our ability to fund and deliver critical services.

Will all of this be borne by reductions in police services? Of course not. But since it is such a large part of General Fund service costs, any cuts we don't make in these areas would mean even more draconian reductions in other critical service areas such as street and park maintenance, planning and land preservation, and administrative services.

In short, State budget grabs will cripple our ability to fund essential community services — now and long into the future.

Where to From Here? We fully understand and appreciate that the State is facing very real budget problems — because we are facing them, too. However, we believe that the State should balance its budget based on State revenues and expenditures — not local ones. Unlike the takeaways of the mid-1990s, the State promised cities that we would not be adversely affected by the VLF reductions — and that any future State budget problems would be its own, not local government's. Given this commitment, and the severe impact it would have on our community, it would be unconscionable for the State to simply shift its responsibility for balancing State revenues and expenditures onto cities.

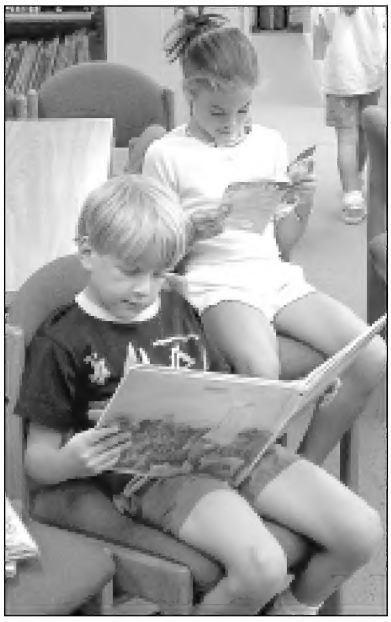
If you agree with us that the State should balance its budget using its own resources — and not those of our community — we urge you to contact Governor Davis, the State legislative leaders and our local legislators to express your opposition now. A sample letter is available at the city offices or via email at cityhall@lovelafayette.org, which you may want to consider using, along with the mailing addresses. Since the governor has convened a special legislative session your input now is critical!

Who to Contact:

- **Governor Gray Davis**
  State Capitol
  Sacramento, CA 95814
  Fax: 916-445-4633
  email: **governor@governor.ca.gov**
- **Senator Tom Torlakson**
  State Capitol, Room 2068
  Sacramento, CA 95814
  Fax: 925-280-0299
  email: **senator.torlakson@sen.ca.gov**
- **Assembly Member Lynne Leach**
  State Capitol, Room 3132
  Sacramento, CA 95814
  Fax: 925-988-6922
  email: **assemblymember.leach@assembly.ca.gov**

Library Site Selected

After studying many alternatives, the City Council found a great win-win solution in their search for a new library site: The Veterans Memorial Hall on Mt. Diablo. The building, currently owned by the County, is old and no longer well suited to the Vets' needs. The new plan, adopted by the Council in December, calls for the city to work with the Veterans and the County to find a site and build the Veterans a brand new home. Once that is done, the old Hall will be razed and a new library built — right in the center of town.



Three groups have been, and will continue to be, active as plans for the library go forward.

The Friends of the Library exists to sustain and improve the library. Twice a month they hold a used book sale to raise funds. They buy special books, support the pre-readers story-time and fund other on-going needs of the library. For the new library, the Friends, led by Lois Lane, will be raising funds for new books, programs and special needs.

The Lafayette Community Foundation was established two years ago with the specific purpose of raising funds to build a new library. Anne Grodin, chair of the Foundation, said, "Selecting a site is a big step forward. Until that was done we couldn't begin our capital campaign for the new library. We have already raised $350,000 for the library building fund, even without an official campaign, so we know there is a lot of support for this."

Finally, there is the City Library Building Committee, appointed by the City Council. This is the official city committee, and includes members from the Friends of the Library, the Lafayette Community Foundation, city staff, and library personnel. Like other city committees, the Library Building Committee conducts studies, formulates plans and makes recommendations to the Council.

Maeve Pessis, long-time activist for the library said, "Although we are still years away from finishing, we are very optimistic about the new library we will eventually build. We are grateful to the City Council for moving forward on this project."

Easy Ways To Access Your Library

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- Touch-Tone Phone: 1-800-984-4636 – Renew items, get a listing of what you've checked out, see if requested items are ready for pick-up, overdues and fines. Also, get answers to reference questions M-Th: 9am - 9pm, Fri-Sat: 9am- 6pm.
- Internet: www.contra-costa.lib.ca.us – Search the catalog, place holds, renew books, access e-books and databases. Links to local branch information.
- Mail – In person, by phone or over the Internet, you may request a book from any branch in Contra Costa County be mailed to your home for a $3.00 fee.
- In-Person – 952 Moraga Road. 283-3872 Hours: Mon: 10am-6pm, Tue & Wed: 12-8pm, Thurs & Fri: 1-5pm, Sat: 10-5pm.

Around Town

TOWN HALL THEATRE: UPCOMING SHOWS – Box Office: 283-1557 or **www.thtc.org.** Tickets now available at The Lafayette Bookstore.
1/24 - 2/17: We'll Take Manhattan: A Broadway Tribute
4/4 - 4/28: Getting and Spending

Feb 23 & 24 **EINE KLEINE ROMANZMUSIK** – The Gold Coast Chamber Players present a post valentines Day concert in which 3 sets of married virtuoses join forces for music from the heart. For tickets, call the Town Hall box office at 283-1557; Info: 283-3728 or **www.gcplayers.org**

Parks & Recreation: Teen Programs **500 St Mary's Road, Call 284-2232 for information & reservations.**

Movie Madness **GRADES 6-8** – Teen night out for a movie, all you can eat hot dogs, chips & soda and prizes. **2/8:** Star Wars Episode I; **3/8:** Ferris Bueller's Day Off • Fee: $6 • Laf Comm Ctr, Sequoia Room. Call for reservations.

Ace of Clubs **GRADES 9-12** – Concert & Dance Club 2/22 & 3/22 • Fee: $5 • Laf Comm Ctr, Manzanita Room

Ski/Snowboard Trips **GRADES 6-12** – All trips include transportation, lift tickets and supervision. One day trips: $76

2/2: Alpine	**3/2:** Sugar Bowl	**3/23:** Sierra at Tahoe
2/9: Northstar	**3/9:** Kirkwood	
2/23: Alpine	**3/16:** Northstar	

Depart Lafayette Bart Station: 4:15am; Return: 8:15pm

Prepared for Emergencies? (continued from page 1)

Joanne Robbins, City Clerk, talked about participation in the drill, "We knew the drill was scheduled, but we were not told anything else. We gathered in a large room, which became the Emergency Operations Center. I was amazed how much it felt like a real emergency. I've worked at the city for many years and was here during the flooding so I know how hectic it gets and how upset people can be. This was good training for handling emergencies; I absolutely feel more comfortable about our ability to respond well in a crisis."

The drill included simulating many activities which would be required in a real emergency: setting up a shelter; dispensing emergency supplies; coordinating the services of police, fire, ambulance, and public works; evacuation of schools; road closures; enlisting mutual aid from other departments; handling media; and keeping everyone informed.

Ray Brunstrom, Contra Costa's Emergency Planner who was on site to observe and evaluate, gave the city an 80% rating, which is good. Cathy Surges said, "He is very experienced with these drills and he thought we did quite well." According to Surges, the city will conduct emergency drills annually as part of the on-going emergency preparedness training for personnel, and to provide an opportunity to evaluate our response capabilities.

Planning Division: Who, What & Why

Meet the Planning Department:

(Top Row: L to R) **Matt Lamborn,** Planning Technician; **Greg Wolff,** Senior Planner; **Bryant Adleson,** Planning Intern; **Mike Rivera,** Assistant Planner;

(Bottom Row: L to R) **Mel Peres,** Code Enforcement Officer; **Kathy Foster,** Planning Department. Secretary; **Christine Sinnette,** Senior Planner; **Lindy Coburn,** Planning Technician; **Niroop Srivatsa,** Planning & Building Services Manager.

Building a new house? Contemplating an addition? Re-roofing? Then you'll most likely be visiting the Planning Division at the City offices. In a community like Lafayette, where residents value the high quality of life, the semi-rural character of the city, and the "small town" downtown, the Planning Division serves an essential function.

The most important responsibility of the Planning Division is to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan, which describes what Lafayette is and what it will be in the future. This is accomplished by delicately balancing the interests of the community and those of personal property owners. In addition to long-range planning, however, the Planning Division also provides direct services to the public in three areas.

Processing Applications

Every building project, from a room addition to a retail complex, requires an approval from Planning. The Division starts by reviewing the plans to ensure they are consistent with the General Plan, zoning ordinances, design standards, and other codes. They then monitor the application through its progressive phases of review and approval by the County Building Department, Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission and/or the Design Review Commission. During the first 9 months of 2001, the Lafayette Planning Division processed 817 building permit applications and 139 development applications.

Providing Planning Assistance

Planners are available to review preliminary plans and they frequently identify issues and concerns that need to be addressed before submitting a formal application. Anyone considering a building project is advised to make an early visit to the Planning Division where planners will explain the application process and provide you with the relevant ordinances and codes. The Division maintains a Planning Counter in the City Offices, open weekdays from 1-5 pm, where residents can walk in and talk to a planner. For more in-depth discussions, applicants are encouraged to schedule a pre-application meeting with staff.

Investigating and Resolving Code Violations

If your neighbor's RV has become a permanent fixture on the street, or the empty lot on the corner has become a junkyard, or there are other problems with noise or nuisances, the Planning Division will help you resolve the problem. Last year, the Division handled over 400 such complaints from residents.

The Planning Staff is dedicated to providing quality service to everyone. Their goal is to streamline the application process, simplify regulations and efficiently process all paperwork.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: **284-1968**

Council Members

Don Tatzin	**Mayor**
Carol Federighi	**Vice Mayor**
Erling Horn	**Council Member**
Ivor Samson	**Council Member**
Jay Strauss	**Council Member**

For messages to **all** Council Members: **Ext. 907**

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	**299-3210**

Community Development

Ann Merideth, Director	**299-3218**
Tony Coe, Engineering Srv. Mgr.	**284-1951**
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Srv. Mgr.	**284-1976**
Ron Lefler, Public Works Srv. Mgr.	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Shanks, Analyst	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks and Recreation **284-2232**

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Yvonne Ozorio, Senior Services	**284-5050**
Teen Programs	**284-5815**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Addresses **Fax: 284-3169**

Street Address:	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210**
Mailing Address:	**P.O. Box 1968** **Lafayette, CA 94549-1968**
Website:	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using the following address format:

First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org

Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

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